

Congress that the Secretary of the Navy should initiate the required training for the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit on the island of Vieques, and that the President should not deploy these forces unless the President determines that they are free of serious deficiencies in their major warfare areas.

Over the past two weeks there have been discussions between the Federal government and the Government of Puerto Rico to try and reach an accommodation that would resolve the current impasse between the Navy and the people of Vieques. Unfortunately, these discussions have not born fruit and there is no resolution in sight. The simple fact is the President needs to act to resolve this impasse.

Today, the Armed Forces are at risk of reaching unacceptably low levels of preparedness. Last week we learned that two Army Divisions are not ready to execute the National Military Strategy without unacceptable risk to the personnel in those units.

If the required training for the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit is not conducted in December, in February these two units will be unable to deploy without serious deficiencies in their warfighting capabilities. We cannot allow this degradation in the readiness of our Armed Forces to occur if we intend to maintain our position as a world leader, and honor our commitment to our military personnel to reduce the risk they incur when they sail into harm's way. As Vice Admiral Murphy, Commander of the Sixth Fleet of the Navy, recently testified before the Armed Services Committee, the loss of training on Vieques would "cost American lives." Over the past several weeks, the Armed Services Committee has held a series of hearings on the important issue of Vieques. Over the course of these hearings, I have become increasingly convinced that it would be irresponsible to deploy our naval forces without the training that takes place at the Vieques facilities.

On Tuesday, September 22, 1999, the Readiness and Management Support Subcommittee, under the leadership of Senator INHOFE, held a hearing to review the need for Vieques as a training facility and explore alternative sites that might be utilized. At that hearing both Admiral Fallon, commander of the Navy's Second Fleet, and General Pace, commander of all Marine Forces in the Atlantic, testified that the Armed Forces of the United States need Vieques as a training ground to prepare our young men and women for the challenges of deployed military operations.

On October 13th, the Seapower Subcommittee, under the leadership of Senator SNOWE, heard from Admiral Murphy, commander of the Navy's Sixth Fleet and the commander who receives the naval forces trained at Vieques, who stated that a loss of Vieques would "cost American lives."

Earlier this month, after the release of the report prepared by the Special Panel on Military Operations on Vieques, the so-called Rush Panel, I held a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee to discuss with Administration and Puerto Rican officials the recommendations of that report, and to search for a compromise solution that addresses the national security requirements and the interests of the people of Vieques. In outlining the need for Vieques at that hearing, Secretary Danzig, the Secretary of the Navy, stated that only by providing the necessary training can we fairly ask our service members to put their lives at risk. Admiral Johnson, Chief of Naval Operations, stated that the Eisenhower Battle Group would not be able to deploy in February without a significant increase in the risk to the lives of the men and women of that battle group unless they are allowed to conduct required training on Vieques. Finally, General Jones, Commandant of the Marine Corps, testified that the loss of training provided on Vieques "will result in degraded cohesion on the part of our battalions and our squadrons and our crews, decreased confidence in their ability to do their very dangerous jobs and missions, a decreased level of competence and the ability to fight and win on the battlefield."

At that hearing, I asked Admiral Johnson and General Jones "Is there any training that can be substituted for Vieques live fire training between now and February that will constitute, in your professional judgment, a sufficient level of training to enable you to say to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit are ready to go." In response they stated "no, sir, not without—not without greatly increasing the risk to those men and women who we ask to go in harm's way, no, sir."

I remain convinced that the training requirement is real and will continue to directly effect the readiness of our Carrier Battle Groups and Marine Expeditionary Units. As General Shelton recently testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, the training on Vieques is "critical" to military readiness. He further stated that he "certainly would not want to see our troops sent into an area where there was going to be combat, without having had this type of an experience. We should not deploy them under those conditions."

All of the military officers with whom we have spoken on this issue have informed us that the loss of Vieques would increase the risk to our military personnel deploying to potential combat environments. The Rush Panel, appointed at the request of the Resident Commissioner from Puerto Rico and the direction of the President, recognized the need for Vieques and recommended its continued use for at least five years.

What we have learned in these hearings is that Vieques is a unique training asset, both in terms of its geography with deep open water and unrestricted airspace and its training support infrastructure. The last two East coast carrier battle groups which deployed to the Adriatic and Persian Gulf completed their final integrated live fire training at Vieques. Both battle groups, led by the carriers U.S.S. *Enterprise* and U.S.S. *Theodore Roosevelt*, subsequently saw combat in Operations Desert Fox (Iraq) and Allied Force (Kosovo) within days of arriving in the respective theater of operations. Their success in these operations, with no loss of American life, was largely attributable to the realistic and integrated live fire training completed at Vieques prior to their deployment.

According to Article II, section 2, of the Constitution of the United States, the President is the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces. As such, he bears the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the men and women in uniform he orders into harm's way, receive the training necessary to perform their mission with the least risk to their lives.

I am encouraged that the President has tried to resolve this matter with the Governor of Puerto Rico in such a way that would allow the Navy to conduct the necessary training. However, I am disappointed that the President and the Governor have been unable to achieve such a resolution.

Mr. President, as long as we are committing our nation's youth to military operations throughout the world; and as long as Vieques is necessary to train these individuals so that they can perform their missions safely and successfully; it would be unconscionable to deploy these forces without first allowing them to train at this vital facility.

Mr. President, the Eisenhower Battle Group and the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit will soon deploy to the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf. In order to do so safely, they must begin preparations to conduct the necessary pre-deployment training on the island of Vieques in December.

The time has come for the President to make a decision to protect our national security and the safety of our men and women in uniform. He must decide to allow the Navy and the Marine Corps to conduct this training, and to notify the Secretary of the Navy and the Governor of Puerto Rico of his decision.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Williams, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting two withdrawals and sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

At 4:00 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Niland one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 34. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to make technical corrections to a map relating to the Coastal Barrier Resources System.

H.R. 642. An act to redesignate the Federal building located at 701 South Santa Fe Avenue in Compton, California, and known as the Compton Main Post Office, as the "Mervyn Malcolm Dymally Post Office Building."

H.R. 3456. An act to amend statutory damages provisions of title 17, United States Code.

H.R. 3419. An act to amend title 49, United States Code, to establish the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3443. An act to amend part E of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide States with more funding and greater flexibility in carrying out programs designed to help children make the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the House has passed the following bill, with amendments, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

S. 1769. An act to continue the reporting requirements of section 2519 of title 18, United States Code, beyond December 21, 1999, and for other purposes.

The message further announced that pursuant to House Resolution 395, the Speaker appoints the following named Members of the House of Representatives to the Committee to notify the President: Mr. ARMEY and Mr. GEPHARDT.

The message also announced that the House has agreed to the following concurrent resolution, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H. Con. Res. 218. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of the Congress that the Government of the People's Republic of China should stop its persecution of Falun Gong practitioners.

H. Con. Res. 239. Concurrent resolution directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make a technical correction in the enrollment of the bill H.R. 3194.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and second times by unanimous consent and referred as indicated:

H.R. 34. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to make technical corrections to a map relating to the Coastal Barrier Resources System; to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

H.R. 642. An act to redesignate the Federal building located at 701 South Santa Fe Avenue in Compton, California, and known as the Compton Main Post Office, as the "Mervyn Malcolm Dymally Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

The following bills, previously received from the House of the Rep-

resentatives for the concurrence of the Senate, were read the first and second times by unanimous consent and referred as indicated:

H.R. 862. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to implement the provisions of an agreement conveying title to a distribution system from the United States to the Clear Creek Community Service District; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 916. An act to make technical amendments to section 10 of title 9, United States Code, and for the other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 992. An act, to convey the Sly Park Dam and Reservoir to the El Dorado Irrigation District, and for the other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1235. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to enter into contracts with the Solano County Water Agency, California, to use Solano Project facilities for impounding, storage, and carriage of non-project water for domestic, municipal, industrial, and other beneficial purpose; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1444. An act to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to plan design, and construct fish screens, fish passage devices, and related features to mitigate adverse impacts associated with irrigation system water diversions by local governmental entities in the States of Oregon, Washington, Montana, Idaho, and California; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 1691. An act to protect religious liberty; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 1714. An act to facilitate the use of electronic records and signatures in the interstate or foreign commerce; to the Committee on Commerce Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 1875. An act to amend title 28, United States Code, to allow the applications of the principles of Federal diversity jurisdiction to interstate class actions; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 1869. An act to amend title 18, United States Code, to expand the prohibition on stalking, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 1953. An act to authorize leases for terms not to exceed 99 years on land held in trust for the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians and the Gudiville Band of Pomo Indians of the Gudiville Indian Rancheria; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

H.R. 2260. An act to amend the Controlled Substances Act to promote pain management and palliative care without permitting assisted suicide and euthanasia, and for other purposes; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 2307. An act to designate the building of the United States Postal Service located at 5 Cedar Street in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, as the "Thomas J. Brown Post Office Building"; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 2389. An act to restore stability and predictability to the annual payments made to States and counties containing National Forest System lands and public domain lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management for use by the counties for the benefit of public schools, roads, and other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2442. An act to provide for the preparation of a Government report detailing injustices suffered by Italian Americans during World War II, and a formal acknowledgment of such injustices by the President; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

H.R. 2513. An act to direct the Administrator of General Services to acquire a building located in Terre Haute, Indiana, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

H.R. 2541. An act to adjust the boundaries of the Gulf Islands National Seashore to include Cat Island, Mississippi; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2607. An act to promote the development of the commercial space transportation industry, to authorize appropriations for the Office of the Associate Administrator for Commercial Space Transportation, to authorize appropriations for the Office of Space Commercialization, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

H.R. 2818. An act to prohibit oil and gas drilling in Mosquito Creek Lake in Cortland, Ohio; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2862. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior to release reversionary interests held by the United States in certain parcels of land in Washington County, Utah, to facilitate an anticipated land exchange; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2863. An act to clarify the legal effect on the United States of the acquisition of a parcel of land in the Red Cliffs Desert Reserve in the State of Utah; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 2879. An Act to provide for the placement at the Lincoln Memorial of a plaque commemorating the speech of Martin Luther King, Jr., known as the "I have a Dream" speech; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 3002. An act to provide for continued preparation of certain useful reports concerning public lands, Native Americans, fisheries, wildlife, insular areas, and other natural resources-related matters, and to repeal provisions of law regarding terminated reporting requirements concerning such matters; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 3051. An act to direct the Secretary of the Interior, the Bureau of Reclamation, to conduct a feasibility study on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation in the State of New Mexico, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Indian Affairs.

H.R. 3063. An act to amend the Mineral Leasing Act to increase the maximum acreage of Federal leases for sodium that may be held by an entity in any one State, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 3073. An act to amend part A of title IV of the Social Security Act to provide for grants for projects designed to promote responsible fatherhood, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 3075. An act to amend titles XVIII, XIX, and XXI of the Social Security Act to make corrections and refinements in the Medicare, Medicaid, and State children's health insurance programs, as revised by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997; to the Committee on Finance.

H.R. 3077. An act to amend the Act that authorized construction of the San Luis Unit of the Central Valley Project, California, to facilitate water transfers in the Central Valley Project; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 3090. An Act to amend the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act to restore certain lands to the Elim Native Corporation, and for other purposes; to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

H.R. 3137. An act to amend the Presidential Transition Act of 1963 to provide for training of individuals a President-elect intends to nominate as department heads or appoint to